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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

NSC/PFIAB Review Completed.

29 July 1982

The Honorable Anne Armstrong
Chairman, President's Foreign
Intelligence Advisory Board
340 Old Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Anne,

Subsequent to our conversation several days ago about the critical reaction of some consumers of intelligence to the quality of support they are receiving, as reported by Sy Weiss, I have been consulting with John McMahon, Bob Gates, and Harry Rowen on what we can do to improve this relationship. Frankly, we are at a bit of a loss to deal with the situation as a general problem.

For example, the suggestion has been made that we establish closer relationships with the Assistant Secretaries. The DDO geographic division chiefs already meet with Assistant Secretaries at State on a weekly basis. The NIOs and DDI Office Directors are also in frequent contact with the Assistant Secretaries or Deputy Assistant Secretaries, not just at State and Defense but elsewhere in government as well. Moreover, the four of us are in relatively constant contact with officials at that level and at higher levels in a broad range of departments. In short, our impression is that a great deal of contact already exists between our principal consumers and one or another senior intelligence official on a regular and continuing basis.

Furthermore, the negative tone of many of the comments reported by Sy puzzles us. We receive relatively few criticisms of our work--either by the NIC or the DDI--from these officials with whom we are in regular contact. Indeed, our experience is quite the contrary. We frequently receive letters and memoranda from senior officials in a number of departments commending the work that we have done and usually in the same document asking for additional work on their behalf.

I know that our work always can be improved. Much of it is often produced under very tight time deadlines and sometimes on subjects where, frankly, our data base and information are not sufficient to make either well-documented or confident estimates. At the same time, it is very difficult for us to pinpoint problem areas in the absence of specific criticism to any of us or our subordinates by our consumers and the lack of specificity provided by Sy and others who are reporting these comments indirectly.

As I am certain you are aware from your discussions with the four of us, we are deeply committed to improving the quality of analytical and estimative support provided to policymakers. We welcome comments, and particularly constructive criticism, on the work that we do. Nor, I believe you and Leo will agree, are we bureaucratically defensive. On the other hand, we produce

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many hundreds of monographs and papers each year and thousands of current intelligence items. We cannot take action to deal with criticism cast in huge generalities. Much of our work is good. It is in identifying that which does not measure up that we can always use specific help.

Some people who have been in Washington for awhile are often somewhat jaded and critical of intelligence estimates and analysis across the board, deprecating their quality and insights. We who manage the analytical and estimative components of the Intelligence Community are all too aware of this and, in many instances, have ourselves been quite critical. Accordingly, within the past 18 months we have made an enormous number of changes in the analytical and estimative organization and process with a view toward the long-range improvement of the quality of this work. I am concerned that some of the criticism you are hearing is based on experience prior to that time and an inadequate exposure to the changes that have been made and that are already reflected in the quality of what we do.

In sum, as DCI I find it difficult to make use of criticism cast in the most general terms and without reference to the source or the subject. You can depend upon our taking action to deal with shortcomings if we have something specific to go on.

Yours,

William J. Casey

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